

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A piece of luggage comprising:

a first frame having a perimeter and an open side;

a second frame having a perimeter and an open side;

a strip of flexible material attached to the perimeters of both of said frames such that said first frame and said second frame enclose a volume which can be increased by moving said second frame away from said first frame; and

a first expansion mechanism, said first expansion mechanism comprising:

a-protective plate attached to said first frame;

an expansion plate attached to said second frame and coupled to said protective plate, said expansion plate and said protective plate configured for selective positioning relative to one another in a collapsed position wherein said first frame and said second frame are positioned a first distance from one another and in an expanded position wherein said first frame and said second frame are positioned a second distance from one another, said second distance being greater than said first distance; and

a lifting mechanism coupled to said ~~protection~~ protective plate and to said expansion plate, said lifting mechanism configured to position the first frame and the second frame between the collapsed position and the ~~extended~~ expanded position;

wherein, in at least one intermediate position between said ~~extended~~ expanded position and said collapsed position, said expansion plate is not in contact with said ~~front~~ protective plate.

2. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said expansion plate and said protective plate are resiliently supported in said ~~extended~~ expanded position and configured to release the expansion plate without damage to said expansion mechanism when subjected to a

predetermined force when positioned in the ~~extended~~ expanded position.

3. (original) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said expansion plate is trapezoidal in shape.

4. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said protective plate defines an opening and said expansion plate is received in said opening, said opening dimensioned to interfere with a portion of said expansion plate when in the ~~extended~~ expanded position.

5. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said protective plate includes opposite sides, said opposite sides engaging and supporting said expansion plate when in the ~~extended~~ expanded position and preventing lateral movement of the expansion plate relative to the protective plate.

6. (previously presented) The luggage of claim 1 further comprising a second expansion mechanism attached to said first frame and said second frame at a location opposite said first expansion mechanism.

7. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said protective plate comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining an opening therebetween, said expansion plate being in contact with the first and second tabs on said protective plate when in the ~~extended~~ expanded position.

8. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said protective plate comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining an opening therebetween, said tabs being angled toward one another and said expansion plate extending between the tabs in the opening, wherein when the expansion plate is moved to the ~~extended~~ expanded position, the tabs bind opposing side edges of the expansion plate and limit further movement of the expansion plate relative to the ~~protection~~-protective plate.

9. (currently amended) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said lifting mechanism comprises a rotatably mounted handle defining a pushing pin, said expansion plate defining a

slot, said pushing pin located in said slot and moving said expansion plate relative to said ~~protection~~protective plate as said handle is rotated.

10. (previously presented) The luggage of claim 1 wherein said lifting mechanism is positioned between said protective plate and said expansion plate.

11. (currently amended) A luggage expansion mechanism comprising:

a protective plate defining an opening at a top edge thereof;

an expansion plate received in said opening and selectively positionable relative to said protective plate from a collapsed position to an extended position and back again; and

a rotational lifting mechanism, secured between the protective plate and the expansion plate, said lifting mechanism arranged so that rotation of said lifting mechanism causes said expansion plate to move relative to said protective plate;

wherein, said expansion plate is resiliently detained in said extended position by said lifting mechanism, thereby releasing said ~~extension~~ expansion plate from the ~~extending~~ extended position and allowing the ~~extension~~ expansion plate to move relative to the protective plate without damage to said expansion mechanism when subjected to a predetermined force when positioned in the extended position.

12. (currently amended) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism comprises a rotatably mounted handle defining a pushing pin, said expansion plate defining a slot, said pushing pin located in said slot and moving said expansion plate relative to said ~~protection~~ protective plate as said handle is rotated.

13. (previously presented) The mechanism of claim 12 wherein said slot defines a detent, said pushing pin resiliently retained in said detent when in the expansion plate is in the extended position.

14. (previously presented) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism

comprises a pushing pin, said pushing pin traversing an arcuate path as said lifting mechanism is actuated.

15. (previously presented) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said lifting mechanism is positioned between said protective plate and said expansion plate.

16. (currently amended) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said protective plate comprises first and second tabs depending therefrom and defining ~~an opening~~ the opening therebetween, said tabs being angled toward one another and said expansion plate extending between the tabs in the opening, wherein when the expansion plate is moved to the extended position, the tabs bind opposing side edges of the expansion plate and limit further movement of the expansion plate relative to the protection plate.

17. (previously presented) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein said expansion plate is trapezoidal in shape.

18. (previously presented) The mechanism of claim 11 wherein the expansion plate floats in an intermediate position between the collapsed position and the extended position, thereby permitting internal shifting of the mechanism in use.